

What "color" is your ideal career path?

CHOOSING A CAREER

Take this quiz and find out. BY ALAN BERNSTEIN

It's easy to find a job; the hard part is finding one that's right for you. Alan Bernstein, author of *Guide to Your Career* (The Princeton Review), explains how to find a job you'll love through a little self-analysis, including the Career Style Mini-Quiz™, which identifies (as a color) your interests and work style.

When Michael Jordan scored more than 60 points in one game, he reported entering a state of timelessness where

moments "stood still." We call that state "flow."

When we are in a state of flow, we feel easy and natural. That's how most of us would like to feel in our careers.

What career will put you in "the flow"?

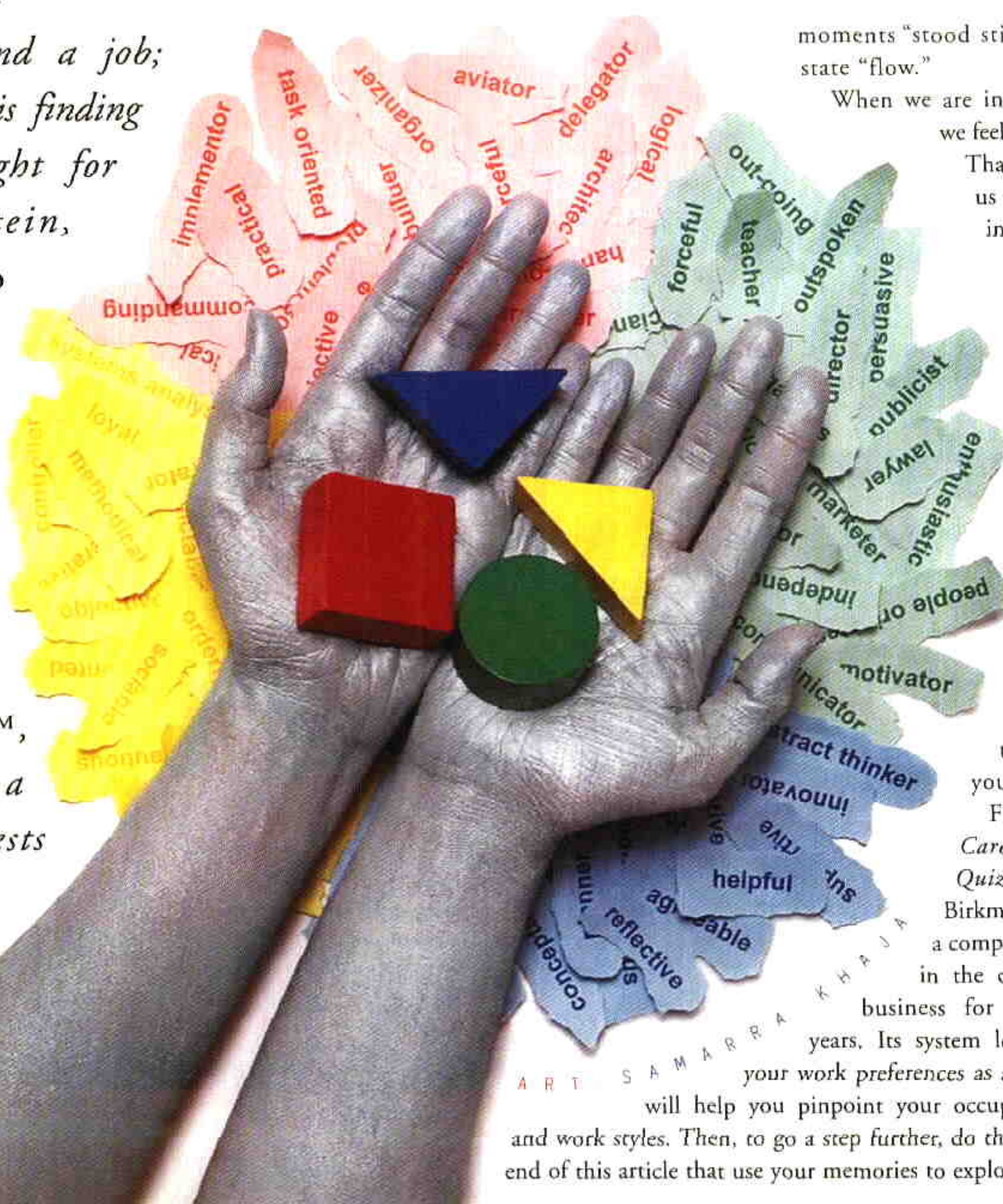
There are dozens of career assessment tests designed to help you answer that question.

Here we present a short version of one to start you on the path toward your ideal career.

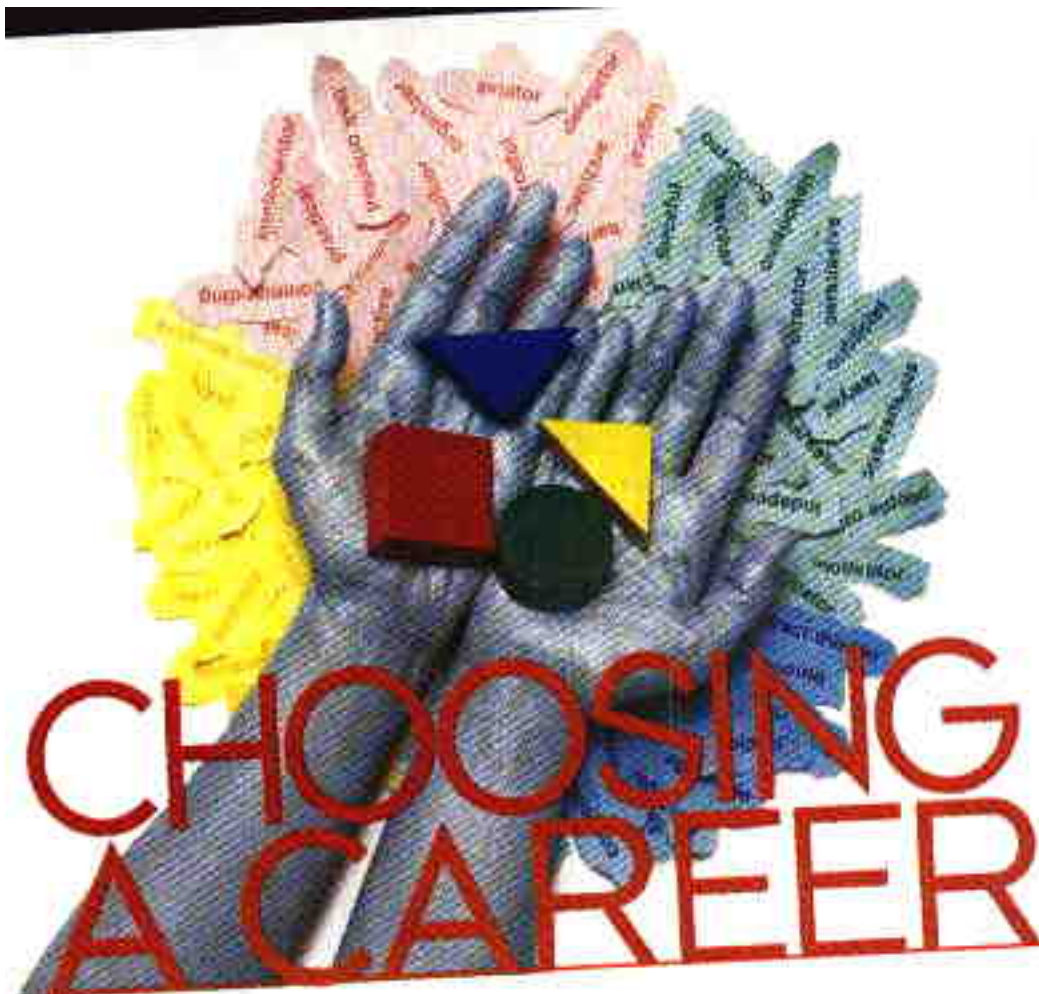
First, take the Career Style Mini-Quiz™ developed by Birkman International, a company that has been in the career assessment

business for more than 40 years. Its system lets you visualize your work preferences as a color. The quiz

will help you pinpoint your occupational interests and work styles. Then, to go a step further, do the activities at the end of this article that use your memories to explore job roles.



ART



Career Style Mini-Quiz™

Your "Birkman Colors" represent your interests and style as a worker. Read the statement in **Column A**, then read the statement across from it in **Column B**. For each pair, put a check mark next to the statement that is most descriptive of you. As you make your choices, assume that all jobs are of equal pay and prestige.

COLUMN A

1. ☐ I would rather be a wildlife expert.
2. ☐ I would rather be a company controller.
3. ☐ I would rather be a tax lawyer.
4. ☐ I would rather be an auditor.
5. ☐ I would rather be a production manager.
6. ☐ I would rather be an accounting manager.
7. ☐ I would rather be a bookkeeper.
8. ☐ I would rather be a writer.
9. ☐ I would rather be a clerical worker.
10. ☐ I would rather be a payroll manager.
11. ☐ I would rather be an audit manager.
12. ☐ I would rather be an artist.
13. ☐ I am usually patient when I have to wait for an appointment.
14. ☐ It is easy to laugh at one's little social errors or "faux pas."
15. ☐ It is wise to make it known if someone is doing something that bothers you.
16. ☐ It's not really OK to argue with others even when you know you are right.
17. ☐ I like to bargain to get a good price.
18. ☐ It is easy to be outgoing and sociable at a party with strangers.
19. ☐ I would read the instructions first when putting a new toy together for a child.
20. ☐ It is usually best to be pleasant and let others decide if your ideas are worth accepting.
21. ☐ I usually like to work cautiously.
22. ☐ Generally, I prefer to work quietly with a minimum of wasted movement.
23. ☐ I don't like to have to persuade others to accept my ideas when there is strong forceful opposition or argument from others.
24. ☐ It is better to listen carefully and be sure you understand when topics are being discussed.

COLUMN B

1. ☐ I would rather be a public relations professional.
2. ☐ I would rather be a TV news anchor.
3. ☐ I would rather be a newspaper editor.
4. ☐ I would rather be a musician.
5. ☐ I would rather be an advertising manager.
6. ☐ I would rather be a history professor.
7. ☐ I would rather be an electrician.
8. ☐ I would rather be an elected official.
9. ☐ I would rather be a carpenter.
10. ☐ I would rather be a manager of engineering.
11. ☐ I would rather be a safety manager.
12. ☐ I would rather be a salesperson.
13. ☐ I get restless when I have to wait for an appointment.
14. ☐ It is hard to laugh at one's little social errors or "faux pas."
15. ☐ It is wise to remain silent if someone is doing something that bothers you.
16. ☐ It's OK to argue with others when you know you are right.
17. ☐ I don't like to have to bargain to get a good price.
18. ☐ It is hard to be outgoing and sociable at a party with strangers.
19. ☐ I would just "jump in" and start putting a new toy together for a child.
20. ☐ It is usually best to be forceful and "sell" your ideas to others.
21. ☐ I usually like to work fast.
22. ☐ Generally, I prefer to move around and burn some energy while I work.
23. ☐ I like to sell and promote my ideas with others even when it takes some argument.
24. ☐ It is better to speak up quickly and be heard when topics are being discussed.

Scoring Your Answers

Enter counts of items you marked in **Column B** in the spaces below. Page 9 explains how these scores correspond to your interest and style colors. Write your colors below, and read on to see how they relate to career choices.

INTEREST

COLOR _____

- Count the number of items checked in **Column B** for the first six items (1-6) and place that count in this space:

Interest H*

- Count the number of items checked in **Column B** for the second six items (7-12):

Interest V*

STYLE

COLOR _____

- Count the number of items checked in **Column B** for the third six items (13-18):

Interest H*

- Count the number of items checked in **Column B** for the third six items (19-24):

Interest V*

*Note: H and V are random letters used to identify sets of traits.

Your Interest Color

Now that you have these four counts, find your interest color. Simply read the four statements below and see which one describes your counts for interest. The color associated with the statement that describes your counts is the best estimate of your interest color you can make from this exercise.

• **BLUE** Your interest color is probably blue if your **Interest H** count is 4 or more (4, 5, or 6) and your **Interest V** count is 3 or less (1, 2, or 3). You like creative, humanistic, thoughtful, quiet types of job responsibilities and professions.

• **GREEN** Your interest color is probably green if your **Interest H** count is 4 or more (4, 5, or 6) and your **Interest V** count is 4 or more (4, 5, or 6). You like persuasive, selling, promotional, and group-contact types of job responsibilities and professions.

• **RED** Your interest color is probably red if your **Interest H** count is 3 or less (1, 2, or 3) and your **Interest V** count is 4 or more (4, 5, or 6). You like practical, technical, hands-on, problem-solving types of job responsibilities and professions.

• **YELLOW** Your interest color is probably yellow if your **Interest H** count is 3 or less (1, 2, or 3) and your **Interest V** count is 3 or less (1, 2, or 3). You like organized, detail-oriented, predictable types of job responsibilities and professions.

Your Style Color

To estimate your style color, read the four statements below and see which one describes your counts for style. The color associated with the statement that describes your counts is the best estimate of your style color that you can make from this exercise.

GREEN CAREERS COMMUNICATORS

Advertising Executive

Attorney

Buyer

Fund-Raiser

Hotel Manager

Insurance Agent

Investment Banker

Publicist

Real Estate Agent

Television Reporter

• **BLUE** Your style color is probably blue if your **Style H** count is 4 or more (4, 5, or 6) and your **Style V** count is 3 or less (1, 2, or 3). You prefer to perform your job responsibilities in a manner that is supportive and helpful to others with a minimum of confrontation. You prefer to work where you and others have time to think things through before acting.

• **GREEN** Your style color is probably green if your **Style H** count is 4 or more (4, 5 or 6) and your **Style V** count is 4 or more (4, 5 or 6). You prefer to perform your job responsibilities in a manner that is outgoing and even forceful. You prefer to work where things get done with a minimum of thought and where persuasion is well received by others.

• **RED** Your style color is probably red if your **Style H** count is 3 or less (1, 2 or 3) and your **Style V** count is 4 or more (4, 5 or 6). You prefer to perform your job responsibilities in a manner that is action-oriented and practical. You prefer to work where things happen quickly and results are seen immediately.

• **YELLOW** Your style color is probably yellow if your **Style H** count is 3 or less (1, 2 or 3) and your **Style V** count is 3 or less (1, 2 or 3). You prefer to perform your job responsibilities in a manner that is orderly and planned to meet a known schedule. You prefer to work where things get done with a minimum of interruption and unexpected change.

Understanding Your Colors

As you begin to reflect on the career or profession you are drawn to, you will want to consider whether it contains aspects that match your interests. If your occupational interest is green, for example, you will likely feel natural in an environment that calls for promotion or persuasion—like advertising or law.

While your interest color shows *what* you like

to do, your style color shows *how* you like to do things. Your style color also indicates how others might describe you. Your style color adds extra insight for possible career choices.

It is not uncommon for a person's interest and style colors to be different. A person may like the types of job responsibilities associated with their interest, but prefer to practice these responsibilities in a manner and within an environment that is consistent with their style.

For example, a green interest and blue style combination suggests a career option that involves persuasion performed in a humanistic, creative, and supportive style. This is a person who likes selling, promoting, and group-contact responsibilities but who also wants a cause or product he or

OCCUPATIONAL INTERESTS

Check out the activities that correspond to your interest color.

Red likes to:

- Build
- Organize
- See a finished product
- Solve a practical problem

Green likes to:

- Sell and promote
- Persuade
- Motivate people
- Counsel or teach
- Work with people

Yellow likes to:

- Schedule activities
- Do detailed work
- Keep close control
- Work with numbers
- Work with systems

Blue likes to:

- Plan activities
- Deal with abstraction
- Think of new approaches
- Innovate
- Work with ideas

she can believe in. A fund-raiser for a nonprofit company may have both green and blue traits.

A red interest would likely be drawn to an active career or profession, say a visible leadership role in a company. If you have a blue style, however, you will likely need some downtime to withdraw and reflect on the *meaning* of proposals. A red interest, red style, on the other hand, might maintain an entirely proactive work style. A red interest with a yellow style may be drawn to a leadership role, but is likely to operate conservatively with a close eye on the bottom line. A red/yellow may be an entrepreneurial type of person who yearns to start their own business.

RED CAREERS IMPLEMENTORS

Aerospace Engineer

FBI Agent

Architect

Physician Assistant

Chef

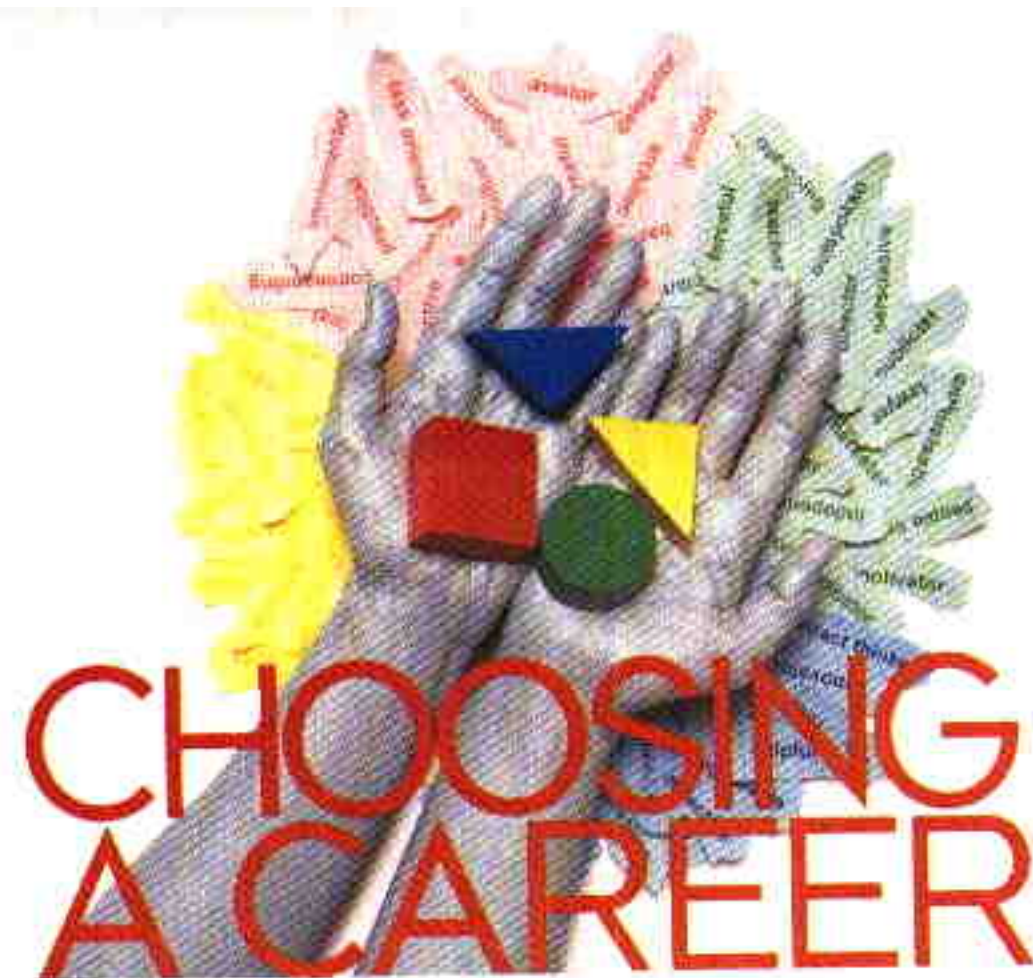
Pilot

Chemist

Police Officer

Computer Engineer

Webmaster



Mining Your Memories

The color quiz can start you in the right career direction, but you may want to take a step further. By carefully examining your past, you can discover qualities about yourself that will lead you to a rewarding career.

To begin, recall a time when you had to accomplish a task—something you were not sure you could do. In doing this project you found that you could not only complete it, but that time had slipped away. You were in a state of “flow” and ordinary linear time disappeared.

Try to remember those environments in which you’ve been most creative and happiest. They can be school, work, Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts, summer camp, working on a hobby, or playing a sport—wherever you’ve felt that you were completely satisfied to be doing what you were doing and in the way you were doing it. See if you can isolate some common themes.

STYLE

Check out the activities that match your work style color.

Red appears:

- Objective about people
- Commanding
- Competitive
- Practical
- Forceful

Green appears:

- Personable
- Directive
- Outspoken
- Independent
- Enthusiastic about new things

Yellow appears:

- Sociable
- Orderly
- Cooperative
- Consistent
- Cautious

Blue appears:

- Perceptive
- Agreeable
- Conscientious
- Reflective and creative
- Cautious

What I Was Doing When I Felt Happiest

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

For some of you critical thinkers, this may be a tough task, so we’ve developed a reverse twist to jog your memories:

Times When I’ve Felt My Worst

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

The purpose of this second list is to help you figure out what was lacking in those experiences. You may then be able to work backwards to create your list of what conditions encourage you to feel happy and creative.

After you’ve finished your lists, select up to three specific memories in which *timelessness* was a key ingredient. These are times when you were so involved in completing a project, accomplishing some task, or solving a problem, that time slipped away, and you couldn’t tell how long you had been working. When you recall these specific occasions, jot them down here:

“In-the-Flow” Moments

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

Select your favorite “in-the-flow” moment and write a 250- to 350-word story. Be specific; appeal to the senses. What did it feel like to be in that situation? Why, specifically, was this moment an exciting experience? What were the activities that you were doing that you found so absorbing? What were the colors, odors, sounds, and textures? What were you trying to accomplish and how did you do it? Did you expect to be able to do it?

YELLOW CAREERS

ADMINISTRATORS

Accountant

Bookkeeper

Court Reporter

Financial Aid Officer

Health Care Administrator

Office Manager

Surveyor

Interpreting Your Story

Now read your story to yourself or a friend. First, note what you are drawn to, what the action or subject is, in short, your *interest*.

Then observe your *style*. How were you operating in this memory? Were you alone, with one other person, or in a group? If you were in a group, were you leading or following? We might ask you to consider, for your *style*, which of the following are the most important:

- Having plenty to do
- Having to make clear-cut decisions
- Having others be direct and logical
- Having objective supervision
- Knowing exactly what to do
- Being able to work without interruption

BLUE CAREERS

PLANNERS

Actor

Animator

Artist

Child Care Worker

Journalist

Musician

Nurse

Photographer

Physician

Professor

As you complete these exercises, patterns may emerge. You should discover what experiences are “timeless” for you. The idea is then to find a work environment that will offer those types of experiences. Then you will be in the flow.

Now take the information you have gathered about yourself and start talking to people who do things you might like to do. Can you work in your best style in their career? Are your interests reflected in the way they apply themselves in their work?

To get more information on career assessment and the Birkman Method, go online at www.review.com.

Alan Bernstein is a psychotherapist with an expertise in career development.